

## K. HOMELESS NEEDS ANALYSIS

### 1. Purpose and Goal

Utah's goal to address homelessness since 1990 has been and continues to be "to eliminate homelessness so far as is practicable."<sup>1</sup> The strategy is to build upon the information gathered in the last decade of providing resources to local service providers and also through state and national studies which indicate the need to concentrate on transitional and permanent housing opportunities for Utah's homeless. This goal and strategy is predicated on an observation by Governor Michael O. Leavitt, who argued in early 1994 that "it doesn't matter who you are, shelter is a fundamental need."<sup>2</sup> We might echo Anna Kondratas of the Interagency Council's *Council Communique*, when she wrote "The goal is to have a strong housing safety net, but also a viable private-sector, low-income housing market."<sup>3</sup>

Essential to the success of these efforts is coordination among the state, local government, non-profit groups, and the private sector in general, as well as regional homeless coordinating committees established in Weber, Salt Lake, and Utah counties and various rural human services coordinating bodies. The state's five year strategy includes continuing to compile twice a year "an overall tabulation of the overnight sleeping capacity of existing shelters providing emergency, transitional, and permanent housing for handicapped homeless and an overall tabulation of the number of proposed shelters and their projected overnight sleeping capacity."

This information will continue to be made public to better understand homelessness in Utah and to refine public policies aimed at alleviating homelessness. The State will continue to encourage all homeless providers in the state to apply for any available federal funds.

Over the next year, the State proposes to:

- Partner in developing 100 additional units of transitional and permanent housing for homeless individuals and families by targeting no less than \$1,000,000 in HOME or state funds toward the special needs of this population, with special emphasis on assisting with the "modified decentralization" plan proposed by the Salt Lake County Council of Governments for the Salt Lake area;
- Track more closely the problem of waiting lists and overflow and readjust state resources accordingly;
- Continue the state funding for new rural housing authorities in Roosevelt, Cedar City, and Moab and support their applications for Section 8 certificates and vouchers;

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<sup>1</sup>Kerry William Bate, *Utah's Comprehensive Homeless Assistance Plan* (Salt Lake City: State Ad Hoc Committee & Community Development Division, August 1990), pp. 61-62

<sup>2</sup>Ralph Goff, "The Utah Housing Squeeze: 'State: Shelter a Basic Need,'" *West Valley Eagle*, 10 February 1994.

<sup>3</sup>*Council Communique* (March 1991).

- Aggressively address the problems of the homeless mentally ill by continuing to implement the recommendations of the Report of the Federal Task Force on Homelessness and Severe Mental Illness, *Outcasts on Main Street*, by promoting "systems integration" through better networking, resource identification, coordinating, and assigning of responsibilities; improve outreach and access to existing programs; expand housing options and alternative services, and generate and disseminate knowledge and information.<sup>4</sup> It is critically important that linkages with mental health providers continue to be fostered and nurtured. The same applies to drug and alcohol programs.
- Develop an ongoing research project to better understand the challenges Utah's homeless face, as well as to identify existing and potential service delivery strategies for those who are homeless;
- Develop at least fourteen housing units per year for persons with AIDS/HIV;
- Work with the non-profit sector in developing better facilities for runaway and throwaway youth in the Salt Lake City area.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Alan I. Leshner, Ph.D., *Outcasts on Main Street* (Washington, D.C.: Report of the Federal Task Force on Homelessness and Severe Mental Illness, 1992), pp. 69-71. *Blueprint for Action: 1989-1993: Comprehensive Mental Health Plan for Services to the Seriously Mentally Ill* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Mental Health Planning Council, February, 1993), pp. 38-40 gives sixteen recommendations for dealing with the problem of homeless mentally ill persons: (1) advocacy groups should consider setting up revolving loan funds to help consumers pay initial housing costs; (2) local mental health centers should investigate using surplus federal property for sheltering homeless mentally ill; (3) establishing volunteer programs; (4) seek more pro bono services by clinical professionals for this population; (5) extend service hours to include weekend and holiday coverage; (6) community mental health centers should cooperate and coordinate with others serving this population; (7) support reauthorization of the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act; (8) the State Board of Mental Health should amend policies to include case management as a required service, and this service should be provided to persons who are both homeless and mentally ill; (9) request additional state dollars for services to this population in high impact areas; (10) same as number 5; (11) professionals should visit other model programs; (12) bring in outside consultants; (13) use the Homeless Mentally Ill Task Force to assist community mental health centers in assessing unmet needs; (14) prepare a building block request for this population; (15) work with housing providers to improve services and promote the "Safe Haven" model; (16) urge congress to allocate funds for further Safe Haven housing models for the homeless mentally ill. The Division of Mental Health's Housing Task Force was established in early 1993 and then merged with the Governor's Housing Task Force; their recommendations include a serious effort to provide affordable housing for mentally ill Utahns.

<sup>5</sup>For the problems with getting this effort underway, see Lois M. Collins, "Group Aims for a Center to Help Homeless Youths," *Deseret News*, 30 December 1992; Anne Wilson, "Program for Sheltering Homeless Teens Find Itself Out on the Street," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 2 December 1993; and Jon Ure, "S.L. Kids Adopt 'Mom,' But Need Place to Call Home," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 30 December 1993 p. D1. The last story profiles Donna Archuleta, an energetic and fearless volunteer with "Visions of Altitude," the group trying to get a drop-in center for homeless youth.